

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 KUWAIT 00379 191525Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
ACDA-07 SAJ-01 MC-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /079 W
-----200018Z 097920 /70

R 191435Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7102
INFO USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
SECDEF WASHDC//ISA//
JCS WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 0379

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, KU, UR
SUBJECT: NO MOVEMENT IN SOVIET-KUWAITI ARMS DEAL

REF: (A) 76 KUWAIT 5698 (090950Z DEC 76) (NOTAL), (B) 76 KUWAIT 5634 (051353Z DEC 76), (C) 76 KUWAIT 5247 (091348Z NOV 76).

1. SUMMARY. CONTRARY TO THE PUBLICLY REPORTED COMMENTS AND LEAKS OF KUWAITI MINISTRY OF DEFENSE SOURCES IN PAST SIX MONTHS, THE SOVIET-KUWAITI ARMS DEAL, DESCRIBED IN REFS A AND B, SEEMS NOT TO BE MOVING AHEAD AT PRESENT, EVEN AFTER MORE THAN A YEAR OF DISCUSSION. END SUMMARY.

2. WE BASE THIS CONCLUSION ON THE FOLLOWING PIECES OF INFORMATION:
(A) THE COUNSELOR OF THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN KUWAIT TOLD THE DCM ON JANUARY 16 THAT THERE WAS STILL NO RESULT FROM THE SOVIET-KUWAITI ARMS TALKS. WHEN ASKED WHETHER SOMETHING WOULD COME

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PAGE 02 KUWAIT 00379 191525Z

OF THESE TALKS, THE SOVIET REPLIED: "YES, I THINK SO, BUT IT IS ONLY A HUNCH."

B. IN A CONVERSATION WITH CHUSLOK ON JANUARY 10, THE DEPUTY COMMANDER OF THE KUWAIT AIR FORCE, COL. AL-SUMAIT, ASSERTED THAT HE HAD INFORMED THE KUWAITI MINISTER OF DEFENSE THAT, IN HIS VIEW, NO SOVIET WEAPONS, EXCEPT PERHAPS THE SA-7 MISSILE, SHOULD BE PURCHASED BECAUSE "KUWAIT'S NEIGHBORS" (READ SAUDI ARABIA)

WOULD BE DISPLEASED AND, REGARDING AIR DEFENSE WEAPONS, THE USG WOULD BE UNWILLING TO COOPERATE FULLY WITH THOSE IMPLEMENTING A SOVIET SALE OF ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS TO ACHIEVE THE DESIRED INTEGRAL AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM FOR KUWAIT.

C. THE JANUARY 10 EDITION OF THE KUWAITI WEEKLY MAGAZINE AL-YAKAZAH QUOTED "SOVIET DIPLOMATIC SOURCES" AS CONFIRMING THAT KUWAIT "HAS NOT TAKEN ANY STEPS TO BUY SOVIET ARMS" IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT THE USSR IS "COMPLETELY READY TO RECEIVE SHOPPING LISTS OF ARMS" AND IS "WILLING TO MEET THE WISHES OF KUWAIT IN THIS CONNECTION AT ANY TIME . . ."

D. ON THE SAME DAY THIS MAGAZINE ARTICLE APPEARED THE KUWAITI MINISTER OF DEFENSE IS REPORTED TO HAVE CAUTIONED THE LOCAL PRESS TO "REFRAIN FROM PUBLISHING REPORTS IN RELATION TO ARMS AND ARMAMENT, INCLUDING OTHER SENSITIVE MILITARY ISSUES UNLESS SUCH REPORTS ARE AUTHORIZED BY COMPETENT AUTHORITIES." AT THE SAME TIME, THE MINISTER REPORTEDLY REFUSED TO ANSWER A REPORTER'S QUESTION REGARDING "NEWS REPORTS WHICH INFERRRED THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS NOT SO FAR RECEIVED ANY REQUEST FROM KUWAIT FOR ARMS PURCHASES." THE MINISTER WAS REPORTED AS SAYING THAT A DISCUSSION OF SUCH MATTERS "IS NOT IN THE HIGHER INTEREST" (KUWAIT TIMES, JANUARY 11).

2. COMMENTS: IN RETROSPECT, IT SEEMS THAT THE DEFENSE MINISTRY HAD BEEN TRYING TO PRESENT AN IMAGE OF FORWARD MOVEMENT IN THE SOVIET-KUWAIT ARMS NEGOTIATIONS. AS EARLY AS AUGUST 1976, MINISTRY SOURCES REPORTEDLY WERE SAYING THAT THEY WERE "PUTTING THE FINAL TOUCHES" ON AN ARMS PURCHASE AGREEMENT WITH THE SOVIETS, AND IN 1976 THE MINISTRY SENT A MILITARY DELEGATION TO MOSCOW WHICH RETURNED WITH WHAT THE MINISTRY CALLED "SOVIET APPROVAL" FOR CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 KUWAIT 00379 191525Z

THE PACKAGE. AGAIN IN EARLY DECEMBER, MINISTRY SOURCES REPORTEDLY TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE MINISTER AND HIS STAFF WERE INVOLVED WITH "FINAL TOUCHES," AND THIS TIME EVEN SPELLED OUT THE COMPONENT WEAPONS. NOW THE MINISTER'S WARNING TO PRESS, HOWEVER, SUGGESTS THAT HE MAY BE TRYING TO CHOKED OFF FURTHER PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS OF ANY POSSIBLE SOVIET DEAL. WE NOTE, TOO THAT THE AL YAKAZAH ACCOUNT OF THE SOVIET'S REMARKS COINCIDE CLOSELY WITH REMARKS MADE BY THE MINISTER HIMSELF TO THE AMBASSADOR LAST MONTH (REF A) AND BY THE SOVIET COUNSELOR TO THE DCM. MORE TO THE POINT, HOWEVER, MAY HAVE BEEN AMBASSADOR'S WARNING REGARDING COMPLICATIONS THE INTRODUCTION OF SOVIET ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONS WOULD RAISE WITH RESPECT TO AIR DEFENSE ROLE U.S. HAS UNDERTAKEN IN KUWAIT WITH SALE OF HAWKS. APPARENT CONFIRMATION OF GOK APPRECIATION OF THIS PROBLEM MAY BE SEEN IN INFORMATION JUST RECEIVED BEFORE THIS MESSAGE WAS TO HAVE BEEN DISPATCHED, NAMELY, AN MOD REQUEST TO USLOK FOR PRICE AND AVAILABILITY ON SALE OF VULCAN ANTI-AIRCRAFT SYSTEM (SEPTEL). HOWEVER, THIS DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT GOK INTEREST SA-7 AND FROG/SCUD MISSILES HAS BEEN ABANDONED, ALTHOUGH JUSTIFICATION FOR ACQUISITION OF LATTER

HAS ALWAYS BEEN DUBIOUS.
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Message Attributes

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Control Number: n/a
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